

REMARKS

The specification has been amended to correct misspellings, correct reference to the drawing figures, and to correct for errors in referring to elements shown in the drawing figures.

Claims 1-16 are currently pending in the application. Claims 1 and 10 have been amended to highlight that the options are governed by a sequence or rules governing the conversation. Support for this amendment is discussed on page 6 of the application at lines 16 et seq.

Claims 1-16 were rejected as being anticipated by U.S. Patent 7,415,537 to Maes (a patent owned by the same assignee as the present application).

Despite the similarity in the words used by the two patents, the Maes patent and the present application are referring to manifestly different things.

The Maes patent uses the word “conversational” as a synonym for “multimodal”, which itself means that the human may be interacting with the computer system in any of multiple “modalities” such as speaking, typing, clicking buttons, pushing numbers on a phone handset, listening, reading text, looking at pictures or videos, etc. The Maes patent deals with the complexities of supporting these different modalities.

The present application uses “conversation” in a completely different sense, to mean a multi-step, patterned sequence of messages exchanged between a computer system and a person (or another computer system). By “patterned”, it is meant that certain messages may or may not be appropriate at any given point depending on the messages that have been exchanged so far. Thus, for example, a “conversation policy” in the manner used by the present application, would specify that after receiving the message “Thank you”, the recipient should reply with either the message “Your welcome” or the message “No, thank you!”, but should not reply with the message “Partly cloudy with a chance of rain”. The modality in which these messages are communicated has nothing whatever to do with the message-exchange

patterns as described in the application. The Maes patent does not show or describe management of a patterned sequence of messages. To highlight this distinction, claims 1 and 10 have been amended to require that the options are governed by a sequence or rules governing the conversation.

In short, the Maes patent covers a system that supports the sending of a message such as “You’re welcome” by speech vs. by text, etc. In contrast, the claimed invention covers a system that helps users select which message to send, e.g., “You’re welcome” vs. “Thank you”, etc.

With reference to claim 1, Maes does not have

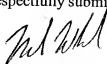
show the user a state of the conversation and options for selection by the user. said options being governed by a sequence or rules governing the conversation; and data input means installed on the user device by which the user selects an available option and fills in message content that conforms with the conversation policy in use by the conversation-enabled applications

The passage referenced in column 13 of Maes is directed to the “multi-modal” function of Maes where speech commands could be used instead of for example keyboard input or DTMF signals. The passage referenced in column 14 of Maes is also directed to the multi-modal aspects of the Maes invention and has nothing to do with the state of the conversation.

In view of the foregoing, Applicants submit that Claims 1-20 are in condition for allowance. The Examiner is respectfully requested to pass the above application to issue. The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below, if needed.

Applicants hereby make a written conditional petition for extension of time, if required. Please charge any deficiencies in fees and credit any overpayment of fees to Applicants' Deposit Account No. 50-0510 (IBM Corporation).

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Michael E. Whitham', is written over the typed name.

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